

SPECIAL JOINT COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

April 08, 2013

4:30 p.m.

The Clerk called the meeting to order.

The Clerk called the roll.

Present: Alderman Corriveau, Committee Member Connors, Alderman Craig,
Committee Member Staub

Committee Member Ambrogi and Alderman Shaw arrived late

Messrs.: K. DeFrancis, M. Tursi

3. [Discussion regarding safety in the schools.](#)

Alderman Craig stated when we discussed this at the last meeting, I think what we said is that we would go into non-public and get an update on what was currently happening within our schools.

Committee Member Staub stated members of the School Board have already heard from Mr. Robidas and Dr. Brennan about the specific things that we did not want to talk about in public so Committee Member Ambrogi has heard those things.

On motion of Alderman Craig, duly seconded by Committee Member Staub, it was voted to go into non-public session to discuss security related issues under the provisions of RSA 91-A:3 I(g).

A roll call vote was required on the motion. Alderman Corriveau, Committee Member Connors, Alderman Craig, Committee Member Staub voted yea.

The meeting was called back to order.

Alderman Corriveau stated before we discuss the budget, which might take up a little bit of time, we will take up the matter referred to us by the Board of Mayor and Aldermen on gate receipts.

*On motion of **Alderman Craig**, duly seconded by **Alderman Shaw**, it was voted to discuss the addendum referred to the committee:*

*The Committee on Accounts, Enrollment and Revenue Administration respectfully recommends, after due and careful consideration, that the communication from David Gosselin, School District Athletic Director, requesting authorization to utilize the gate receipts in the athletic budget to be used for uniforms, supplies and equipment be referred to the Special Joint Committee on Education.
(Unanimous vote)*

Alderman Corriveau asked Karen or Michael, do you have any information for us on this gate receipts proposal? I know the aldermen had some questions. We didn't actually have any sort of plan put in front of us, we just had the request from what I can recall.

Alderman Craig stated I have the minutes from the meeting when this was discussed. Are you on the Committee on Accounts, Enrollment and Revenue Administration?

Alderman Corriveau replied I am on that committee.

Alderman Craig stated you can probably speak to it better than I but it seems like Mr. Sanders confirmed that there is about \$45,000 that is collected and that goes

into the general fund of the School District, not the general fund of the City. What Mr. Gosselin is asking for is to use that money and not to go into the general fund. In my mind, that is a School District decision because if you do that, that could affect or will affect revenues in the general fund and therefore could affect the tax cap. We, as the Board of Mayor and Aldermen, have no authority to tell you how to spend your money so I'm not sure why this came before the Board of Mayor and Aldermen.

Ms. Karen DeFrancis, Business Administrator, stated that is accurate. I did speak with Mr. Sanders about the gate receipts. For instance, in next year's budget we have \$45,000 as part of our revenues. If that \$45,000 was to be pulled out of those general fund revenues and put into a special revenue fund, we would be \$45,000 less in revenue so we would have to make that up somehow, whether it be through other revenue sources or if not, through tax revenue.

Alderman Corriveau asked anything you wanted to add to Dave Gosselin's request?

Ms. DeFrancis replied I don't have anything to add.

Alderman Corriveau stated I'm trying to recall, maybe Alderman Shaw remembers, what the discussion was in the Committee on Accounts, Enrollment and Revenue Administration. I'm wracking my brain and can't see to remember.

Alderman Shaw stated it was basically was what was just said. There were some questions as to whether...

Alderman Corriveau stated I think Alderman O'Neil and Alderman Long had a couple of questions.

Alderman Shaw stated one of the questions was; are there some funds designated right now to uniforms, supplies and equipment.

Ms. DeFrancis stated there are a couple of different sources for athletics. The first would be in our general fund budget. The athletic department does have a line item budget that has salaries and benefits and uniforms and rental or equipment and those sorts of things. Again, that is within the general fund budget. The athletics department also has a special revenue fund, which they collect the rental of the fields so whenever they rent out a field that money goes into a special revenue fund and then when there is some sort of a field maintenance issue they can utilize those funds to pay for that. That has a small balance in it, maybe \$20,000. The final item would be in our expendable trusts. We do have an athletics expendable trust for equipment so whatever they budget in the general fund for equipment, if, let's say the budget in the beginning of the year was \$45,000, if they only spend \$35,000 then that balance would have to go into the expendable trust to be used for future athletic purchases. They have not purchased anything with those funds in quite some time. Recently, the Board of School Committee asked the aldermen for permission to utilize \$35,000 of those funds for the curriculum audit. There might be about \$5,000 left in that fund. Those are the three different sources of funding that athletics has.

Alderman Craig asked so if you chose, you could continue putting the money in the general fund, but you could transfer to where you choose without affecting the tax cap, correct?

Ms. DeFrancis asked the gate receipts that we are talking about?

Alderman Craig replied right.

Ms. DeFrancis stated again, the only thing that it would affect is that we would not be bringing in \$45,000 of revenue on the general fund side.

Alderman Craig stated what I am suggesting or saying is that you would continue bringing that money into the general fund. Where do you use it now?

Ms. DeFrancis replied it balances. It is on the revenue side of the equation so we have our expenditures in general fund, the \$150 million budget, and included in that are athletic expenditures and then on the revenue side we have the revenues that support that \$150 million.

Alderman Craig stated you could say that it is spent on athletics.

Ms. DeFrancis responded absolutely because the athletics budget is close to \$2 million, but the revenue from athletics is \$45,000.

Alderman Corriveau stated thank you for these minutes, Alderman Craig. Alderman O'Neil, in the Committee on Accounts, Enrollment and Revenue Administration, requested detail on what sports the School District charges for right now, is the School District looking to charge for any other sports? What do they charge and what does the plan look like for next year? I don't know if you have that on you right now. Maybe if you could get a communication to the City clerk with that information we will forward this on. Well, let me ask the committee. Do we feel that we need to forward this to the Board of Mayor and Aldermen? If that is the case, then maybe we will move to receive and file this and in the interim ask for the information on the particular sports and what revenues they generate.

Ms. DeFrancis stated sure, we can do that.

On motion of Alderman Corriveau, duly seconded by Committee Member Ambrogio, it was voted to receive and file the addendum.

4. [Discussion regarding the FY14 budget.](#)

Alderman Craig stated when Dr. Brennan was before the Board of Mayor and Aldermen, we asked a number of questions and we have not received responses yet. I was just curious as to the status of those. One of them was whether or not the budget he is proposing would allow for contracted teachers to come back.

Ms. DeFrancis stated we are working on that list of questions. I thought the question was, are the current one year new positions in next year's budget. I think the answer at the time was we would have to get back to you, we thought it was in one, but not in the other. All of those positions are in both the state approved budget, as well as the tax cap budget. The only difference in positions between the school approval budget that we submitted and the tax cap budget was that the tax cap budget did not include the 41 new positions that we were adding and it also did not fund all of the retirement positions. I think there were ten of them that were not being funded. Other than that, all of the positions that are currently funded in the School District were in both of those budgets.

Alderman Craig asked are there any additional retirements or is that number still the same?

Ms. DeFrancis replied when we presented the packet to the aldermen I believe that there were 19 in the packet. When we met with the aldermen there were a few

more. As of today, there are 25 teaching positions and we also have a principal and an assistant principal retiring. I believe they have until April 15th.

Alderman Craig asked with that 25, how many would come back within the tax cap budget? Only eight?

Ms. DeFrancis replied no, we would not be able to fill ten of them. The ten would not change. We will be following up with the remainder of those answers to the aldermen. I know one of them was the technology plan and that is going to our IT committee tonight.

Alderman Craig stated regarding the technology bond, just to talk a little bit about that, we addressed it in CIP and we tabled it in CIP. I would like to relay my thoughts in terms of why I voted to table it because I don't know that I articulated it very well during the meeting. We had talked about it when Dr. Brennan was in front of us. We also talked about it at another full board meeting. At that meeting I suggested we table it because I felt that it would be important to keep all of the budgeting together and I view this as a portion of the City's budget. I did motion to table it because within the mayor's budget presentation he specifically stated that he had hoped that Dr. Brennan would call a joint meeting between the School Board and the Board of Mayor and Aldermen to discuss the intended use of the bonding and the goals for the plan. I agree with the mayor on that and I think we should have a joint meeting or a plan before I feel comfortable approving the \$2.8 million bond. Also during that meeting, I did mention that I am pretty comfortable with approving the \$500,000 to go towards the bandwidth and the wi-fi access. I do believe that is necessary as well as the security. What I am not fine with at this point is approving the \$1.8 million for computers when we heard from Dr. Brennan when he said that he wouldn't be able to bring those into the schools for another three years. I was questioning why we would go out and bond the

\$1.8 million now when potentially, if we are going to defer the book loan again, we could use that money to hire more teachers. We have a need, here and now, today, for teachers. I was questioning why we would want to bond that balance for computers that we wouldn't have in hand. If we were only to bond \$1 million, the cost to the School District would be less by about \$150,000. That is where I was going with that. I just wanted to make sure that you knew.

Ms. DeFrancis stated just to let you know, tonight there is an IT meeting at 5:30 p.m. and that plan will be discussed and then it will be brought up at the full board level tonight as well.

Mayor Gatsas stated I just happened to be watching in the back room and I just want to make sure that I get some clarifications. It is not \$1.8 million for computers. It is \$1.5 million and \$300,000 goes to professional development for teachers. There is no question that spending the \$1.5 million in the first year may be difficult, but I think it is apparent and I'm not sure that I said we should have a joint meeting to discuss it because I think it is important that each one of the boards, especially when the School Board comes through with a unanimous vote forward with an appropriation that Dr. Brennan has supported, I think it is important that we have the conversation on how we are going to pay for it and when it is going to be due. I think the Wi-Fi is \$500,000 to implements in all the schools. The safety issues are another \$500,000 for telephones and also for intercom systems. I think that you may not spend \$500,000 in the first year, but you are going to be spending it in the second year very quickly on the \$1.5 million for computers. That didn't just come from me. That came from sitting down with the IT director at the School District, having conversation with him and looking at a plan that he had before him. Those are discussion that I had with him. That is the plan that I brought forward and I think that some correction on the budget as we discussed the tax cap budget... In that tax cap budget as we presented, it frees

up \$400,000 on a payment that would have had to been made to books. It comes out of the line item for debt service and \$450,000 that would come out of a line item for purchase of equipment. That \$800,000 can go forward along with the \$1.2 million that I suggested in one time funds that come from the accounts to hire 40 teachers, less the nine, that we can hire. That is what my plan is and that is what my numbers look like. That is where I am at with it. I say that we have no layoffs and we can restore the 23 laid off positions along with 16 other positions.

Alderman Craig stated since you opened up the door, you do have it in writing that you requested a joint meeting in your budget. Can you please go over what you just said? Your budget, the tax cap budget, brings back all of the laid off positions from last year?

Mayor Gatsas replied correct, along with 17 new positions.

Alderman Craig asked for a total complement of?

Mayor Gatsas replied I think it is 26 when you add the nine that you can bring in with the ones that were gone.

Alderman Craig stated no, the total number of teachers. What will the School District look like if we were to approve your budget?

Mayor Gatsas replied I can't tell you what it is going to look like. I can only tell you that based on the positions that were retired there were 23, of which we could bring back nine or ten.

Ms. DeFrancis stated in the tax cap budget that we initially presented and that was before the change in the debt service or the equipment line, there were ten of the 19 retirement positions that we could not fill.

Mayor Gatsas stated and the \$800,000 that we could use from the debt service line item and the \$450,000 in the IT line item that we don't have to go forward with because we are doing the bonding of \$2.8 million would bring back those ten positions. Is that correct, Karen? Ballpark?

Ms. DeFrancis replied yes, that's close.

Mayor Gatsas stated and then using \$1.2 million of one-time funds in the expendable trust would bring back another 22.

Alderman Craig asked I'm sorry, did you say that you used \$1.2 million in one-time funds from the expendable trust in your budget?

Mayor Gatsas replied that is what I proposed. It is not in the budget, but that is what I proposed.

Alderman Craig asked it is not in the tax cap budget?

Mayor Gatsas replied no, it is just a verbal statement that I have made that we could use \$1.2 million in expendable funds to bring back teachers. What was that number, Karen?

Ms. DeFrancis replied it is about 20 per \$1 million. We figure \$50,000 per position.

Mayor Gatsas stated so it is 24. You would have an additional 24 positions and Dr. Brennan was looking for 40, so I'm sure that within that budget we could find some other line items that we can go through and find additional funding.

Alderman Craig asked so your budget will look more like \$154 million? After the expendable trust is used?

Mayor Gatsas replied no, it is \$155.7 million. That is the tax cap budget.

Alderman Craig asked but that does not include the \$1.2 million from the expendable trust so it looks like \$156.9 million. Thank you.

Mayor Gatsas stated your welcome. The door is still open if anyone else wants to venture in.

Alderman Craig asked Karen, can you talk a little bit about the class sizes and what we have been reading in the paper lately versus what we have been told?

Mr. Michael Tursi, Assistant Superintendent, replied as we have said along the way and also what was stated in the *Union Leader* about the class sizes, we have been continuing to monitor it. One of the things that we run into, when we get requests for raw data to go out, people can interpret that as they will. What we have run into is the interpretation of what a lab course is. There isn't any specific definition or description of what a lab course is in ED-306, the state standards for minimal approval, and what we base our lab courses on when we produce the data for class sizes is all the science courses that are for 1.5 credits because those lab courses actually have an additional lab block during the week. They are designed specifically for lab activities and that is what we consider as a lab course so when we produce those numbers around labs it is based on all those courses that are for

1.5 credits, compared to courses that are only for one credit, as well as middle school science classes as well. We do not count them because they are not specific lab courses as we define as the 1.5 credits.

Alderman Craig asked so the discrepancy between the 35 and now over 100 is only caused by lab courses?

Mr. Tursi replied it is a big discrepancy because we calculate four lab courses that are over the state standards compared to that 35 so when you have a 29 course difference that is substantial. It is true; we do have courses that are over the state standards in the middle schools as well.

Alderman Craig asked does the \$159.5 million budget still... When Dr. Brennan presented it, he said that it meets all of the state minimum standards as well as the contracts with sending districts. Is that still your opinion?

Mr. Tursi replied the additional staff that would go to the high schools as well as the middle and elementary schools; Dr. Brennan put that together based on those class size figures.

Alderman Craig asked so they haven't changed from what he built his budget on to now?

Mr. Tursi replied no, not at this point.

Mayor Gatsas asked Mr. Tursi, can you tell me if the \$155.7 million along with the \$1.2 million in additional funding would take the class sizes down also in the middle schools?

Mr. Tursi replied I would recommend that we went with what Dr. Brennan requested, but of course it would help and we would have to look at how we would disperse the additional staff members among k-12 if that was the monies that we received.

Alderman Craig stated it was brought to my attention today that the Livingston track is not being used for Central home track meets because of the condition that it is in. I was just curious, I see that it was presented to the City for CIP, but it was denied. What are the kids going to be doing? What should we be telling our constituents about this?

Ms. DeFrancis replied I know that Mr. Gosselin is obviously aware of this and he does have a plan in place, but I would have to get that plan from him and forward that to you as to where they currently are practicing.

Alderman Craig asked so we are not going to have home track meets at all at Livingston?

Ms. DeFrancis replied I can't answer that. I would have to get that from Mr. Gosselin.

Alderman Craig stated Mr. Capano did confirm that. I have a bit of a problem with that.

Committee Member Ambrogi stated as a follow up on that question, I don't know who would answer this question, but, Committee Member Staub, are you on the athletics committee?

Committee Member Staub replied I am.

Committee Member Connors stated Buildings and Sites discussed it as well.

Committee Member Ambrogio stated it is not my recollection that this issue has come before the full School Board at all. I heard from the same constituent today and it was the first that I heard of this issue so it was a little bit of a concern to me that it is late in the game to be finding out about this issue that obviously we are not going to be able to fix in real time.

Committee Member Connors stated we have discussed this issue at buildings and sites. It is definitely an issue, but it is a financial decision. It just comes down to what our priorities are right now as a School District and whether we put funding into repairing the track or whether funds went to teachers and things like that.

Committee Member Ambrogio stated it is a little bit disappointing that we have a relatively new track and it is unfortunate that it is already in an unusable condition.

Alderman Craig stated I would question too what the cost is for busing students someplace versus what the cost is for fixing the track. I know it is a lot, but if you are going to be busing students for five years to a new track that is going to add up too.

Committee Member Connors stated Committee Member Staub might be able to comment on this as well, but I believe the repairs were somewhere around \$100,000.

Committee Member Staub stated \$120,000, plus the issue is that the tree roots are coming up so there was no guarantee that if we fixed it that it wouldn't happen

again. The long term fix would be more expensive. I believe that is what was explained to us.

Alderman Craig stated Your Honor, you may be able to answer this. We were talking about this earlier. Where do the school CIP requests go that are outside of parks and recreation and facilities? We do have the CIP document from planning, but it didn't include any of the school requests.

Mayor Gatsas replied I believe they all come out of buildings and sites and come in the way they have them categorized.

Alderman Craig stated but they are not included in the Planning and Community Development Department's.

Mayor Gatsas stated I don't think they ever have. It is has not been funded, I don't think that you have ever seen them.

Alderman Craig stated I requested at the last CIP meeting that we get a document that listed all requests, even if they weren't funded. I'll ask Mr. LaFreniere tomorrow.

Mayor Gatsas stated Alderman, I don't think gets them form the School District. I think you are going to have to ask building and sites or the School District to give you that list because it never comes forward.

Ms. DeFrancis stated after the board takes a vote on that, we do forward it to the Planning Department. This year it was a two-page list. I think there were maybe about 40 items on the front page and on the back page were the cash items, which I think that might have been item number three on the first page. Where it goes

from there, I'm not sure how that goes process goes, but I know we forward that information after our board takes the vote.

Mayor Gatsas stated Alderman Craig, maybe you can help me with this. Based on the track at Livingston, I thought there was a fund that was put aside by a group. I thought there was \$90,000 left in that fund.

Alderman Craig stated we have heard that. I know that Mr. Capano met with Mr. O'Neil last year, but we haven't heard anything since and I got an email from a constituent saying that the track is not usable. I did check in with Mr. Capano today, but I don't know. I have not ever seen anything in writing that indicates that that money is available. It has just been a conversation, but I will certainly follow up.

Alderman Corriveau stated I know having talked with some members of the committee, there was some interest, due to the fact that we are now right in the middle of budget season, rather than waiting a month for our next meeting, perhaps trying to schedule a special meeting of this committee sometime within the next couple of weeks so that we can have a special meeting and then our regular meeting. Maura, if you could give some available times and we can check our calendars and maybe schedule something.

Ms. Maura Leahy, Administrative Assistant, stated I don't have the calendar up here with me, but I can definitely email the committee and see what dates are available and what works for everyone.

Committee Member Ambrogio stated my suggestion might be that we look at the dates of either the 29th or the 30th of April. This is a five week month so we don't have any normally scheduled meeting in the fifth week so that would be my

suggestion. I would also just comment that school vacation week of the 22nd, I am not available that entire week. If the 29th or 30th might be a possibility of something where there wouldn't be normally scheduled meetings and that would still be two weeks before the next regularly scheduled meeting of this committee.

Alderman Corriveau asked how about another 4:30 p.m. meeting on the 29th?
Would that work for everyone? Let's schedule that.

*There being no further business, on motion of **Alderman Shaw**, duly seconded by **Alderman Craig**, it was voted to adjourn.*

A True Record. Attest.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Heather Freeman". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Clerk of Committee